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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA AND DRL/NESCA
NSC FOR PASCUAL

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SUBJECT: IRI GARNERING ATTENTION FROM RULING PARTY AND PRESS

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Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

11. (SBU) Over the past week the activities of the International Republican Institute (IRI) have garnered an unusual amount of attention, following on the heels of the Deputy Foreign Minister's November 21 complaint to us about IRI (reftel). In a clear signal of the GOE's mounting displeasure with IRI, on December 2, Safwat el Sherif, secretary-general of the National Democratic Party (NDP),

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issued a press statement noting that the ruling party's secretariat had "examined the secretary-general's report on

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the organization of training sessions for Egyptian party members by some foreign partisan organizations and agencies as well as extending personal invitations to members of the NDP. The secretariat considered this an improper and rejectionable act that serves as a cover-up for interference in the affairs of local parties, and propaganda for foreign agendas with the aim of interfering and steering political action in the service of foreign states." The statement continues, "This circumvention aims at interfering in domestic affairs and influencing the national sense of belonging. The NDP secretariat has rejected invitations to party members by a foreign institute to attend a training session in an Arab country." (Note: The "training sessions" noted are an apparent reference to recent training classes of Egyptians that IRI has organized in Jordan and Morocco. End note). Sherif's remarks were reported by the government news agency, and in a variety of other press outlets.

12. (SBU) On December 5, the sensationalist independent daily newspaper Al Dustour carried an article with the headline, "American Institute to Continue its Activity Training Opposition Cadres, Despite NDP Criticism." The article, sourced to the unreliable and provocative "America in Arabic" internet wire service, states that, "an American institute close to the Republican party to which U.S. president George 1W. Bush belongs, announced that it intends to strongly continue its activity in Egypt despite criticisms of the institute by leading figures in the ruling party, due to its invitations to Egyptian parties and civil society activists in Egypt to attend courses on political work." The article quotes in part from IRI's 2006 annual report, issued on November 29, noting that despite Sherif's complaint, "the USAID-funded IRI insists on 'boosting democracy in Egypt'." (Note: The actual language from IRI's 2006 annual report reads, "Despite restrictions on programmatic activity imposed by the Egyptian government, IRI continues to provide support and technical assistance to activists in non-governmental

organizations and political parties." End note).
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